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Soviet Propaganda Alert

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Summary

In June and July, Soviet external propaganda stressed:

Arms Control and Peace Movements. Soviet propaganda focused on alleged U.S. duplicity at the Geneva START talks. President Reagan's speech at the U.N. Special Session on Disarmament (SSOD) was seen as an attempt to hide Washington's bid for military superiority by portraying the U.S. as a "peace-maker." Peace demonstrations in the U.S. and Western Europe supposedly showed increasing worldwide realization that Washington, not Moscow, is the true threat to peace. A related major theme, following the space shuttle's latest flight, concerned U.S. military plans for space.

Israeli Invasion of Lebanon. Soviets accused the U.S. of collusion with Israel in its move against the PLO in Lebanon. According to Soviet charges, the U.S. wants to impose a Camp David-type arrangement on Lebanon and neighboring territories, leading to "U.S. imperialist domination over all the area."

Gas Pipeline Sanctions. Soviet propagandists decried the sanctions as economic warfare. They claimed that this new version of the Cold War would not damage the Soviet economy, which could resist such pressures. The sanctions allegedly undermine the Versailles economic summit agreements and are designed to increase U.S. economic control over its allies.

Haig Resignation. Alexander Haig's resignation became an opportunity for Soviets to highlight U.S. "problems" in international relations. The former Secretary of State was described as a scapegoat for the administration's foreign policy failures, not as resigning over policy or personal disagreements.

Escalation of the Ideological War. President Reagan's European visit was seen as launching a stepped-up anti-Soviet campaign. Soviet propagandists kept up their attacks on VOA and ICA, accusing the U.S. of increasing its psychological warfare against the USSR.

Chemical and Biological Warfare. Soviet propaganda continued to emphasize alleged U.S. hypocrisy in condemning the USSR for the use of chemical and biological warfare (CBW). Soviets maintained their claim of innocence on all charges of CBW.

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ARMS CONTROL AND PEACE MOVEMENTS

Arms control remained the primary theme of Soviet external propaganda in June and July. The Geneva START talks and the U.N. Special Session on Disarmament (SSOD) reinforced the Soviet emphasis on this subject.

Articles contrasting Soviet and U.S. positions were prominent, stressing that the Soviet Union stands for peaceful international cooperation in the face of supposed relentless U.S. aggression. As evidence supporting this claim, Soviet propagandists interpreted international peace movements as directed increasingly against so-called U.S. escalation of the arms race.

U.S. "Duplicity" at U.N. SSOD

The Soviet response to President Reagan's speech at the U.N. Special Session on Disarmament (SSOD) was completely negative. Soviet attacks on the President's position focused on three major points.

First, the U.S. was accused of general hypocrisy at the U.N. SSOD. TASS news analyst Iurii Kornilov began his June 18 commentary: "Under the impact of the peace-loving policy of the socialist countries and the pressure of the anti-war movement, Washington is ever more often trying to put on the robe of a 'peacemaker'." This was also the theme of a June 17 Moscow Radio broadcast, in which the President's speech was described as "an attempt to direct the attention of the international community away from the fact that it is the United States that is pushing the arms race ahead."

Second, Soviet accounts introduced examples of supposed U.S. historical "aggressiveness" to undermine the President's description of the U.S. as "an initiator of disarmament."

> Such claims are so far from the truth that they could, perhaps, be disregarded, had it not been for the fact that they come from the President of the United States . . . . But what do facts say? We will not go too far into history and recall that it was precisely the USA and not the USSR which was the first to create the most destructive weapon ever--the atomic bomb--and to use it as long [ago] as 1945 without any military need against the peaceful inhabitants of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. (Kornilov)

Third, descriptions of so-called U.S. aggressiveness were contrasted explicitly and implicitly with the declared Soviet goal of "peaceful co-existence." Kornilov claimed that "always, as soon as the threat emerges of the appearance of new, ever more dangerous weapons, the USSR and not the USA proposes that their creation be renounced on a mutual basis." Reagan's "pompous statements" about Washington's restraint, he concluded, are "no more than biased rhetoric."

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Furthermore, in rejecting Soviet peace initiatives, "the U.S. has exposed itself as the main culprit of sabotaging an arms limitation and reduction process and of the aggravation of international tension" (Moscow TASS, in English, July 10). According to this Soviet commentator, the majority of SSOD participants deplored the "negative and destabilizing approach of the United States" and regarded the Soviet initiative as an "important step towards preventing a nuclear catastrophe."

Similar Charges at Geneva START and INF Talks

Soviets accused the U.S. of trying to "complicate or even undermine the Geneva negotiations" by leveling slanderous charges against the USSR. Viktor Shlenov (Moscow Radio in Italian, July 8) labeled as slander U.S. charges of Soviet violations of Brezhnev's announced moratorium on SS-20 deployments in the western USSR. The Soviet Union "always keeps its word," he proclaimed, and "American and Atlantic politicians and propagandists have compromised themselves several times by accusing the Soviet Union of violating agreements."

This "premeditated disinformation" is aimed, Shlenov said, at "undermining confidence in the word and concrete deed of the Soviet Union." Adversaries of detente and those who want to increase international tension are responsible, in the Soviet view, for these charges.

The insincerity and duplicity of the Reagan administration, according to TASS English (June 15), are clearly seen from the fact that it "requests from Moscow much more and offers less in exchange." Thus, the underlying themes of all Soviet accounts of the Geneva talks are: the U.S. refuses to bargain in good faith and seeks unilateral advantages over the Soviet Union.

Peace Movements

The Soviet treatment of worldwide peace movements remained simple and direct: world opinion finds the U.S. at fault for the arms race and favors Soviet initiatives for peace. For example, Moscow television, July 3, carried commentary by Leonid Zamiatin, head of the Central Committee's International Information Department, to the effect that such movements are aimed almost exclusively against the "saber rattling" of the Reagan administration. "The entire policy of our party and our state is . . . in harmony with the moods of the world's people," he added.

In Soviet eyes, there is the further satisfaction that

> the powerful antimilitarist movement on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean . . . represents a serious obstacle to the implementation of the colossal war program of the United States and its West European allies who want to change the military balance in the world and achieve supremacy over the Soviet Union. (Moscow Italian, July 8)

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The Space Shuttle

Returning to a theme voiced often in the past, Soviet propagandists used the most recent flight of the U.S. space shuttle as a pretext for attacks on an alleged American aim of militarizing space. Pravda (July 2) proclaimed that "Washington's sinister schemes to use space for its own aggressive aims becomes clearer with each passing day."

Izvestiia (June 26) confessed its shock at the "impudence with which world public opinion is being challenged and a further step is being taken toward developing the arms race" with the U.S. shuttle program. The Pravda piece cited above called "Washington's plans to achieve military superiority in space . . . a great danger to mankind."

Of course, both newspapers went on to say, "the USSR will not permit the United States to become military master of space." Denying any such goal for the USSR, they declared that the Soviet Union, unlike the U.S., seeks the complete demilitarization of space.

ISRAELI ATTACK ON THE PLO IN LEBANON

Soviet invective over the Lebanon events fell as much on the U.S. as on Israel. The U.S. was first accused of building its Middle East policy on "anti-Arab principles" and giving "unconditional support to Israel." According to a Moscow broadcast to the Arab world on June 10:

> Israel's plans to occupy Lebanon, including the capture of Beirut, were coordinated with Washington. This was stated by Israeli ministers and was confirmed by President Reagan and U.S. Secretary Haig, who both stated that they fully support Tel Aviv's policy in the Middle East and particularly its aggression against Lebanon.

Soon Soviets were attacking the U.S. for complicity in the Israeli operation, charging that the United States not only had advance knowledge of the invasion but even gave Israel its blessing in the venture (Moscow domestic radio, July 11, and television, June 11).

Soviet attacks also stressed a second theme. As Pavel Demchenko stated in a June 10 commentary in Pravda, "American imperialism is putting into effect its hegemonistic schemes in the Near East." If the U.S. is "actively" supporting Israel, it is because "Tel Aviv's actions accord with the schemes of American imperialism." The Soviets repeatedly claimed that the U.S. has one goal in the Middle East. TASS political news analyst Boris Shabayev stated on June 8 that the U.S. is planning "to clear the road for the implementation of the second part of the Camp David collusion: perpetuation of the occupation of Arab lands under the guise of so-called 'administrative autonomy of Palestine.'"

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Perhaps the strongest charge leveled against Israel and, by extension, the U.S. was that of "genocide" against the Palestinians (Pravda, July 5). The Israelis were often likened to Nazis and fascists, and the U.S. was castigated primarily for supplying the weapons and other support for this "barbarous aggression."

President Reagan's agreement in principle to make available U.S. Marines for securing the implementation of any agreement was described as the first step in this "hegemonistic scheme." TASS on June 14 scored the proposed "multinational peace-keeping force in Lebanon" as merely an excuse for "American military presence in Lebanon [meaning] a considerable expansion of the area of U.S. gendarme operations in the oil-rich region of the Middle East."

Moscow domestic radio on July 6 called the U.S. offer to send the Sixth Fleet to help evacuate Palestinians from Beirut merely a "pretext for the Americans to take part in the occupation of the Lebanese capital." And TASS English (July 6) decried the U.S.'s "perfidious designs" in the Middle East: making the whole region into its "military-political bridgehead" and laying hands on the oil and other natural resources of the Arabs.

As a final line of attack, U.S. statements about commitment to peace and President Reagan's decision to give $25 million to aid the victims of the conflict were waved aside as mere pretense, "a cover-up of [the U.S.'s] connivance with the aggressor."

Interestingly, many Soviet commentators had to take time out from attacking Israel and the U.S. to defend the Soviet arms supplied to the Palestinians and Syrians. In the face of the poor Arab performance against Israelis equipped with American arms, Moscow had difficulty trying to save face without at the same time insulting the military prowess of its Arab customers (Moscow TASS English and Moscow television, both July 15).

GAS PIPELINE SANCTIONS

President Reagan's denial of U.S. technology and credit to the USSR in building its pipeline to Western Europe drew prolonged and sharp criticism from Soviets. Most played up the negative reaction from some West Europeans to the U.S. move, claiming that European leaders were indignant at this "unilateral decision" after a U.S. pledge not to do so at the Versailles summit (Moscow domestic radio, June 29).

Political observer Eduard Mnatsakanov (Moscow television, July 14) told his viewers:

> The economic war declared by Reagan against the Soviet Union has turned into a real threat of economic disaster for U.S. allies. The allies, first of all the FRG, Britain and France,

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have not simply condemned the Reagan decision, but have declared it to be against the law.

Commentator Iurii Maksimov wrote that "White House strategists think that if they succeed in blocking this project it will become possible for them to shake loose the entire system of well-adjusted mutually beneficial cooperation between socialist and capitalist countries" (Moscow TASS English, June 25).

But even though the U.S. was preparing a "new edition of the Cold War" (Moscow Worldwide English, June 22) and trying to turn "routine trade between states into an instrument of political blackmail and pressure" (Moscow TASS English, June 19), the Soviet Union would not buckle. In fact, the USSR will emerge from this trial even stronger than before, Moscow domestic radio (July 11) assured its listeners. It will be the United States itself whose interests are most hurt by all this, according to Moscow TASS English (June 21).

HAIG RESIGNATION

Soviet commentators preferred to view the Secretary of State's resignation as the result of deep internal divisions within the Reagan administration and as a convenient excuse for wholesale attacks on U.S. foreign policy.

> The disagreements somehow are related to the harsh policy the Reagan administration is pursuing in a number of major international issues. Reagan's imperialistic ambitions are completely and shamelessly confirmed. At times even Western journalists call it Reagan's pathological diplomacy, which nobody can either predict or analyze. (Moscow television, July 3)

Thus, while American journalists stressed the personal differences between Haig and the White House inner circle (the "California group" in Soviet terminology), and questioned the secretary's style of conduct and ambitions, Pravda (June 27) held that "the scandal which has broken out in Washington's corridors of power reflects primarily the crisis of the administration's foreign policy."

Another Soviet analyst, Gennadii Arievich, on Moscow Domestic Radio (July 4) told his audience that "Haig's departure denotes misfortune in the Washington foreign policy kitchen." Oleg Anichkin, also on domestic radio (July 9), spoke of the "muddle and confusion in American foreign policy" and noted that "there is beginning to be talk about the incompetence of the President's entourage in foreign policy affairs."

Citing a long list of purported recent American troubles in international affairs--"the growing gulf between the United States and Western Europe," the growing "contradictions" between the U.S. and Latin America (especially over the Falklands), U.S. "responsibility for the genocide" by Israel in Lebanon, and "Washington's escalation of the arms race"--Pravda correspondent Thomas Kolesni-

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chenko alleged that the administration, in these circumstances, needed a "scapegoat." And Haig was it. (June 27)

For Izvestiia correspondent Melor Sturua (June 28), who agreed with Kolesnichenko's assessment, the final straw was Lebanon. The White House needed to save face and influence among moderate and conservative Arab states, he wrote, and therefore Haig became "a very essential figure" as a scapegoat in this "dishonorable political gambit."

Soviet commentators were more reluctant to speculate about the possibilities of policy shifts and what sort of Secretary of State George Shultz would be. Anichkin summed up cautiously: " . . . one can say that perhaps there will be some changes, but most likely the changes will affect the style and not the content."

ESCALATION OF THE IDEOLOGICAL WAR

President Reagan's proclamation of a new "crusade for freedom" on his European trip roused strong Soviet protest. Pravda commentator V. Bolshakov called it a crusade against communism and said that the U.S. is now preparing not only for "psychological warfare" against the USSR but also for "much more dangerous operations." The purpose of this new crusade "is no secret--the 'destabilization' of the existing system in the socialist countries and countries of a socialist orientation," he wrote (July 6).

Leonid Zamiatin, head of the Central Committee's International Information Department, pronounced the President "intoxicated by militarism." He continued: Washington's anti-Soviet and anti-socialist orgy has a specific, practical purpose. It is a psychological offensive intended to validate and justify an unprecedented arms race, preparations for confrontation with the Soviet Union and the socialist community and, ultimately, for a "limited" or--according to the Pentagon's latest plans--"protracted" nuclear war. (Literaturnaia Gazeta, June 30)

TASS analyst Leonid Ponomarev on July 15 attacked the "tools of subversion" which the U.S. is relying on in its "stepped-up propaganda and psychological war"--Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe. The same day TASS English hit the Voice of America and its new director, John Hughes, for being part of this same crusade.

The ICA and Director Charles Wick drew the fire of still other Soviet propagandists. For example, Izvestiia reporter Iu. Kashlev, stated that "with the Reagan administration's advent to power, the scale of U.S. propaganda expanded and its anticommunist trend was intensified," and noting particularly USICA's role in this (June 26). Zamiatin, in the Literaturnaia Gazeta piece noted, mentioned Director Wick as a friend of the President, added that he is a millionaire, and characterized the ICA as "deliberately avoiding an honest and constructive discussion of disputes."

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CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WARFARE (CBW)

Soviet propagandists maintained their established stance on the question of CBW. The main attack on the U.S. was based on the supposed build-up of the American chemical weapons arsenal in the face of the Soviet "peace offensive." Both Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and Amoretta Hoeber, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army, were quoted on this point. The latter was reported to have said that "the U.S. must constantly threaten the Soviet Union with the use of CBW . . . ."

As to Western statements that rearming America with chemical weapons "serves exclusively defense purposes," Soviets cried that "chemical weapons are not defensive but offensive weapons; they are weapons of aggression and mass annihilation of people," again claiming that the U.S.'s primary purpose is to "threaten the Soviet Union."

In a June 15 interview in the Prague Rude Pravo, Soviet Colonel-General Nikolai Chervov accused the U.S. of currently working on "developing ethnic chemical weapons that would annihilate specifically designated races and ethnic groups."

The Reagan administration was further condemned for supposedly resisting Soviet CBW ban efforts, and customary charges of hypocrisy were also leveled against it. To quote from the above-mentioned interview:

> [Question] . . . Why did Washington need the slanderous fabrications alleging that the USSR had used, or was about to use, toxic substances, for instance, in Afghanistan and Cambodia?
>
> [Answer] It needed this terrible lie in order to cover up the American Army's bloody crimes during the years of U.S. aggression in Indochina and for justifying in some way the White House decision to expand the mass production of other kinds of chemical weapons.

In an equally vituperative approach, O. Mikhailov, in a June 11 article in Novoe Vremia, called U.S. accusations a "smokescreen of lies." "The U.S. chemical superarming is taking place against the background of a slander campaign about the USSR's 'involvement' in the use of chemical weapons in Southeast Asia and Afghanistan." He concluded with a warning as to the catastrophic implications of the alleged U.S. policy: "the mass use of these weapons will not only lead to mankind's destruction, it will make the continued existence of living organisms on earth impossible."

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